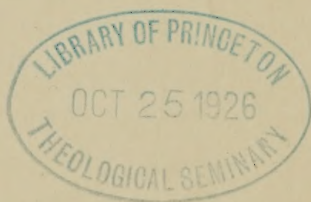


CHRIST TO-DAY



LUCIUS HATHFIELD HUGBEE

BR
125
.B925
1926



Division

BR
125

Section

.B925
1926

THE MENDENHALL LECTURES
TENTH SERIES
DELIVERED AT DEPAUW UNIVERSITY

**OTHER BOOKS BY
LUCIUS H. BUGBEE**

**The Man Who Was Too Busy to Find the Child
Living Leaders Judged by Christian Standards
Preparatory Lessons for Church Membership
Flutes of Silence**

✓
The Alendenhall Lectures, Tenth Series
Delivered at DePaul University

CHRIST TO-DAY

A Study in the Contemporary Meaning of
Christian Thought and Experience

By
✓
LUCIUS HATFIELD BUGBEE



THE ABINGDON PRESS

NEW YORK

CINCINNATI

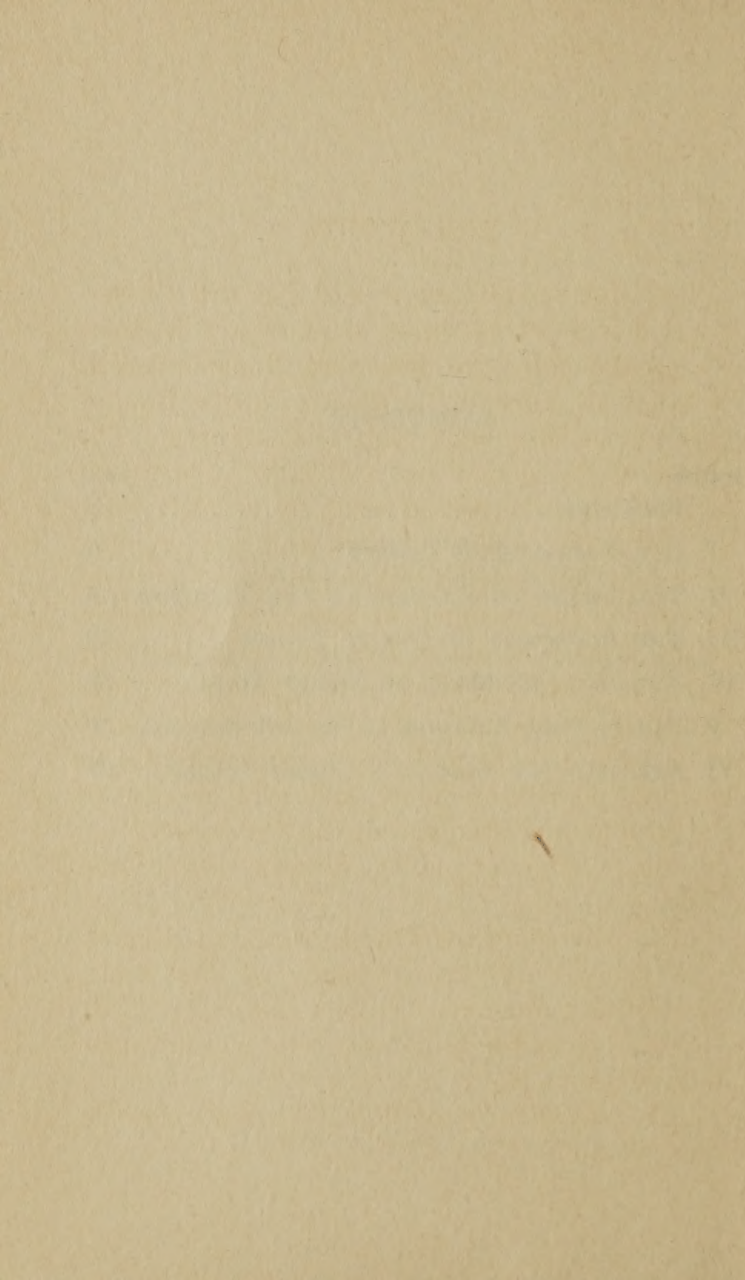
Copyright, 1926, by
LUCIUS HATFIELD BUGBEE

All rights reserved, including that of translation into foreign languages,
including the Scandinavian

Printed in the United States of America

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
FOREWORD	7
I. OUR FRAGMENTARY CHRIST	9
II. THE CHRIST OF EXPERIENCE AND THOUGHT	18
III. THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST TO-DAY	28
IV. KNOWING THE MIND OF CHRIST TO-DAY...	39
V. THE MODERN MEANING OF SIN AND SAVIOUR	50
VI. APPLYING THE ETHICS OF CHRIST TO-DAY..	67



FOREWORD

THE Mendenhall Lectures of DePauw University, to which this series of addresses belongs, was founded by the Reverend Marmaduke H. Mendenhall, D.D., of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The object of the donor was to found a perpetual lectureship which would bring to the University as lecturers "persons of high and wide repute, of broad and varied scholarship, who firmly adhere to the evangelical system of Christian faith. The selection of lecturers may be made from the world of Christian scholarship, without regard to denominational divisions. Each course of lectures is to be published in book form by an eminent publishing house and sold at cost to the faculty and students of the University."

Lectures thus far published under this foundation:

1913, *The Bible and Life*, Edwin Holt Hughes.

1914, *The Literary Primacy of the Bible*, George Peck Eckman.

1917, *Understanding the Scriptures*, Francis John McConnell.

1918, *Religion and War*, William Herbert Perry Faunce.

1919, *Some Aspects of International Christianity*, John Kelman.

1920, *What Must the Church Do to Be Saved?* Ernest Fremont Tittle.

1921, *Social Rebuilders*, Charles Reynolds Brown.

1922, *This Mind*, William Fraser McDowell.

1924, *Present Tendencies in Religious Thought*, Albert C. Knudson.

1925, *Christ To-day*, Lucius Hatfield Bugbee.

LEMUEL HERBERT MURLIN,
President.

CHAPTER I

OUR FRAGMENTARY CHRIST

IT is nineteen hundred years since Christ came and his kingship is still unrecognized. Large areas of life are still unredeemed. Wide reaches of human relationships are still untouched by his Spirit.

Europe has been Christian in name for more than fifteen hundred years. It is full of churches whose foundation reaches back to the early Christian centuries. But in spite of all its churches and religious institutions, Europe has not learned to forgive its enemies or to return good for evil. The policies of the world's greatest nations have been determined for generations by adherents of the churches, but this has not prevented the triumph of hate over love and the pursuit of self-interest rather than the good of all. It has not cured humanity of national egotisms and those prejudices of race and rank and station that cause unhappiness and confusion. It is clear that we have not yet permitted Christ to master our lives, nor have we accepted, in any large measure, the dominion of the kingdom of God.

It is somewhat reassuring to find that Christ himself anticipated the slow and limited growth of his movement. He had absolute faith in the ultimate triumph of his kingdom. He knew that it was good seed that he was sowing. But he knew also that the seed was dependent upon the soil into which it fell and that its growth and fruitage would be conditioned by the character of that soil. Some of it would fall in barren places; some of it would be choked by the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches; some of it would be scorched by the heat of the day. But in spite of this, the Sower went fearlessly forth to sow his seed. From his example of faith and courage we may take heart. But I fancy we will sow the more wisely if now and then we pause to consider the reasons for our failure and the obstacles which interfere with the happy culmination of our effort.

Our failure to understand just what Christ came to do accounts for much of the slow progress of the Kingdom. We do not get the vision of the *whole* kingdom of God. We do not seek its complete dominion. We are content with fragments of it. Some have assumed that the Kingdom was a state of future blessedness, a heavenly society which has very little to do with the concrete situation of to-day. They have therefore comforted themselves with vague visions of

future happiness but have not considered that it was in any sense their duty to cooperate in efforts to establish the rule of Christ here and now.

Others think the kingdom of God is identical with the church—they are safely sheltered if they are within that institution but are in perilous danger if they are outside its fold. What they do within the church must be correct and Christian but what they do outside is of small consequence. Such an idea eventuates in a wall of cleavage between the sacred and the secular, between the church and the world, which leaves wide realms of human activity and relationship altogether outside the dominion of Christ, untouched by the influence of his Spirit.

Some assume, again, that the Kingdom is a purely personal matter and that Christ came to save only the individual soul. He is not interested in our social relationships and therefore his principles are not applicable to economic, political, or industrial life. They have value only for the individual in his personal relationship to God. Sometimes this is extended to include his personal relationships with his family and his immediate neighbors, but to carry it into the field of his larger relationship with society as a whole—this is a radical departure from the original intent of the gospel, and

amounts to a new social gospel which to some conservative minds is a perilous misconstruction of Christ's purpose.

It is difficult to see, however, how anyone can read the New Testament without perceiving that the ideal as Christ preached it was both an individual and a social ideal. He was indeed interested in the worth and value of the individual, but his interpretation of the Kingdom is altogether too broad to permit of its restriction to personal relationships. There isn't the least doubt that Christ thought of his movement as one that was destined to dominate the total life of man.

Another reason for our failure has been our mistaken emphasis. The teaching of Jesus places the emphasis upon life and character and service. He formulated no creed. He elaborated no doctrine. The Sermon on the Mount is full of practical directions concerning life and character. Very early, however, in the Christian movement the emphasis was shifted. The Sermon on the Mount fades into the background; a formal statement of belief comes to the front; doctrinal tests and dogmatic standards take the place of the simple and practical teaching of Jesus. For long centuries we have been more interested in what a man believed than in the way he lived, and correctness of creed has been

more significant with us than correctness of deed.

In his teaching Jesus also put the emphasis upon the inward and spiritual rather than on the outward and formal elements in religion. It was not those who made long prayers and gave tithes of mint, anise, and cummin; not those whose formal attention to rite and ritual was flawless and complete, but, rather, those who were humble in spirit, pure in heart, merciful and kindly in nature, who fulfilled his ideal of righteousness.

When Constantinople was being besieged by the Turks in the fifteenth century and the Christian garrison was hard pressed, they sent for the priests and monks, that they might go up and down the lines encouraging the troops and imparting spiritual reassurance. But the churchmen sent back word that it would interfere with the regular performance of their offices in church and cloister, it would interrupt their periods of formal worship and devotion, therefore they begged to be excused. And on the same ground many of Christ's followers have excused themselves from practical participation in conflicts which would have advanced the rule of God in the lives of men.

This limited, half-way seeking of the Kingdom has resulted in many a compromising position

which has made Christianity, as we have interpreted it, ineffective and powerless. It is not surprising that Oriental peoples have become skeptical of the value of Western interpretations of Christianity. They see it identified with an industrialism, militarism, and materialism whose fruits are repellant to them. The so-called Christian civilization does not appeal to them, and where they have accepted Christ's gospel they are insisting upon its separation from some of these Western trappings.

A significant incident occurred during the World War. A ship was torpedoed. The crew and passengers took to the boats. In the captain's boat was placed a small cannon and compass. The other boats were directed to follow the captain's. They made for land but discovered that there was something wrong in their reckoning. The compass was not pointing true. Someone suggested that the presence of the gun was deflecting the needle. So it proved, for when the cannon was thrown overboard, the needle swung true and the course was found.

This is a rather vivid illustration of the way in which the church has tried to follow the guidance of Christ when it was encumbered with a lot of materialistic and militaristic trappings which deflected the mind from its true interpretation of the gospel. It is likely that the

needle will not swing true until we rid ourselves of some of this compromising baggage.

Such mistakes and errors have given to the world a partial, fragmentary, and distorted gospel. Christ has not yet become the King of all life. He rules only over certain provinces of our experience. Only parts of the kingdoms of this world have thus far become the kingdoms of our Lord.

A real issue before us to-day is the question whether our religion is concerned only with the souls of individuals or with the whole scheme of things with which these souls are so intimately connected. A delegate to a great church conference is reported to have said that the membership which he represented did not wish the church to concern itself with business, politics, or international relations. Its conviction was that it should confine itself entirely to preaching the Lord's kingdom.

What, in the light of the New Testament, is the Lord's kingdom? Did it have anything to do with the question of slavery and the rights of men to property in other men? Has it nothing to do with sobriety and decency as represented in the morals of the community life? Has it nothing to do with the existence of the traffic in poisonous liquors or narcotics which ruin the bodies and steal away the souls of men? Has it

nothing to do with the conditions under which men live and work in crowded cities or filthy shops? Has it nothing to do with public health or with economic conditions which make it impossible for people to live in health and decency and bring up their families with a measure of opportunity for education and culture?

Has it not as much to say to nations that are selfish and proud as to individuals? Does it not mean what it says when it teaches us to love our enemies and do unto others as we would that they should do unto us? Can it be so construed as to countenance national hatreds and unjustified wars? Indeed, can it be so construed as to justify war of any character?

There are two kinds of unbelief. One denies the authority of the Scriptures and the divinity of Christ and the personality of God. The other, while insisting upon the authority of the Bible and the divinity of Christ, denies that the plain teaching of Christ applies to the whole of life. It would confine his principles to the experience of the individual Christian.

Of these two kinds of unbelief the latter is the more perilous. It undermines character. It paralyzes the progress of the Kingdom and is responsible for much of the failure of the Christian centuries. It is the greatest of all heresies, for it denies the efficacy of the power of God and

the Spirit of Christ save in one narrow and limited sphere.

What, then, will it really mean to try Christianity in this larger sense?

First: It will mean what it always has meant—seeking in Christ a personal Saviour and Master and going out to live his kind of life. It will mean accepting his standards of conduct; his interpretation of duty; his conception of God's character and our destiny.

Secondly: It will also mean setting out with a determined purpose to organize life in all its relationships on the basis of the principles of Jesus as set forth in the teaching of the New Testament. It will mean much reconstruction of our systems of education, industry, civic, political, and international life. It will mean such a determined effort on our part to realize here and now the rule of God in the life of man that it will no longer be possible for Jesus to say to us, with a look of sad reproach, "Have I been so long a time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?"

CHAPTER II

THE CHRIST OF EXPERIENCE AND THOUGHT

IN the order of life, experience precedes reflection. First, we suffer pain, then we begin to inquire for the cause of the pain and the possibility of its removal. First, we scorch our fingers in the flame, then, upon reflection, we formulate the principle that "fire burns," and this we pass on to our children for their instruction. Thus the practical wisdom of the world is accumulated and handed on from one generation to another.

It seems, however, that in some sense every generation must experience for itself. You may teach your child the best precepts. He may know them every one by heart and yet break them all. But life is waiting for him, and in its stern discipline he will learn the truth of the precepts you have taught him, and perhaps, reflecting upon his own experience, he will add thereto an increment of value.

Jesus Christ came to men as a wonderful, new experience. Nothing like him had ever occurred before in the realm of character and spiritual

achievement. It is as though the heavens were swept bare of stars and, unannounced, the Light of lights should suddenly appear. He brought to men a new conception of the character of God, a new interpretation of their relation one to another in the universal family of God, a new standard of duty and conduct. He gave them entirely new terms in which to think of life and destiny. It was a wonderful experience.

What was the result? It cannot be better described than in the words of Paul: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." It is a changed world. The aspect of everything is different. Values are changed; relationships are altered; a new perspective is produced.

Many of the younger men among us were in the overseas service in France. For a succession of weary months or years, as the case may be, they found their whole routine of life altered. They were face to face with elemental experience such as danger, exhaustion, hunger, thirst, wounds, and death. There in the uproar and confusion of an unprecedented conflict they found new terms in which to think. Later, when they returned to the more customary routine of ordinary experience they found that for them the world had changed. They scarcely

recognized themselves as the same persons. The aspect of everything was different, and some of them, we know, have found it very difficult to fit themselves again into the old routine.

Something like that happened to the world with the coming of Christ. He brought to men entirely new terms in which to think of God and life, duty and destiny. To those who enter into sympathy with him and learn to think as he did, the world can never be quite the same place again.

When we have such a new set of phenomena presented to us it is inevitable that our minds should begin to work at it and ask questions about it. If on a clear starlit night there should appear the faint glow of a new planet twinkling in the distance like a newly lighted candle, the astronomers and scientists would immediately begin to speculate upon whence it came and whither it was bound. They would plot its orbit and reflect upon its effect on the whole solar system. Finally their theories would crystallize into convictions which they would announce to the rest of the world.

If a geologist should happen to discover a new formation of rock or soil the like of which had never been observed or noted before, his mind would at once begin to work on this fresh problem. What processes of nature produced

it? How did it happen to appear just at that particular point? Scores of such questions would present themselves.

Perhaps this will help us to see more clearly the significance of the new experience of Jesus' coming. He alters everything. He kindles new sympathies, loyalties, and enthusiasms. He pushes back horizons creating a new outlook upon life. It was inevitable that the minds of men should reflect upon this strange phenomenon. Who was this Jesus Christ who left so deep an impression upon the world? Whence had he come? Whither had he gone? What was the deep underlying meaning of his existence?

These reflections gradually hardened into convictions and these convictions crystallized into creeds and dogmas of the church. If, of their own accord, the minds of the first Christians had been slow to do this, they would have been fairly forced into such a process of thinking by the opposition and criticism which Christianity encountered. They were compelled to seek for reasons for the faith that was in them. If one has patience to read Origen's answer to Celsus, one of the keenest of the early antagonists of Christianity, he will see how this process of reflection and hardening opinion was forced upon the first followers of the Master.

Out of this came, of course, the ordered and formulated beliefs of the church. When we are tempted to look with scorn upon these ancient formulas; when we are inclined to feel that they are outworn and fit only for the discard, it is well for us to remember that these creeds once expressed the living faith of thousands of loyal souls. To millions they have been living symbols of the greatest truths. They are still vast reservoirs of faith into which have been poured the religious thought and emotion of generations. With them we cannot break our continuity without serious loss. They will always deserve our respect and careful study, because they embody the reaction of great minds upon the most wonderful spiritual phenomena of history—the being and power of Jesus Christ.

But now another step in the argument. Jesus is an ever-living, growing, expanding experience for humanity. It is not merely that he was born in Bethlehem twenty centuries ago. He is born afresh each day in the souls of thousands of his followers. He continues to be a wonderful phenomenon. He means more to-day than he meant ten, twenty, or fifty years ago. He means infinitely more to us than he meant to his first disciples. Think of the growing Christian consciousness; the stages of development in which the mind of Christ has illuminated prob-

lems of freedom, education, industry, and government. Ever wider fields of experience are being brought under the domination of his spirit. Each generation witnesses some new application of his principles. It follows, therefore, that we must constantly rethink Christ, reflecting upon these new and larger meanings of his life and teaching.

It follows also that the terms in which men thought of him in other ages must necessarily become inadequate for us. Nor is it at all likely that our terms will satisfy those who come after us, for we have not yet exhausted the meaning of Jesus.

Whenever we are face to face with some new experience, it is interesting to note how we feel about for some familiar figures or terms in which to describe or explain it. For example, one has recently returned from China and now he is trying to convey to a group of friends who have never been there some idea of his experiences. Instinctively he refers them to something familiar in their own experience. "It is like this or like that," and then he names something with which they are well acquainted. Or, again, the little child sees the starry heavens and wonders what all the twinkling lights may be. "They are like little lamps," he concludes, for he knows what lamps are like. So he interprets the

mystery of the sky, in terms of something familiar to him in his daily experience.

So when men first began to reflect upon the new and wonderful phenomenon of Jesus' life they called him "The Lamb of God," "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Their Jewish contemporaries would thoroughly understand that figure. They were familiar with the Temple ritual and the great altar of sacrifice where the lamb was slain for the sins of the people. It would be quite clear to them. John, writing still later, uses a phrase from Greek philosophy. He calls Jesus the "Logos." Those for whom he wrote were familiar with the meaning of this term. It was of frequent occurrence in their literature. But these terms do not mean much to us. We are a long way removed from the symbolism of temple and altar and bleeding sacrifice. "Logos" is a term whose significance is understood to-day only by those who are thoroughly familiar with ancient philosophy and literature.

In our growing experience of Christ it is quite natural, therefore, that we should feel about for new terms in which to think of him. What are some of these new formulas? Well, it is quite evident that as never before we are thinking of Jesus to-day as the *Saviour* of the world. To the Christian thought of the present moment,

Jesus is the one solution of all our world difficulties. If society is to be saved from disintegration, his spirit and principles must finally triumph over the antagonisms, divisions and prejudices of races and nations. He must finally bring together in one all things in himself, as Paul suggests. In the name of this universal Master we are busy with our world programs. We are building homes, churches, schools and hospitals in China, India, Africa and the uttermost parts of the earth that they may become centers of contagion for the Christian spirit.

Again, we are thinking of Jesus to-day as the compassionate Lover of all men everywhere. His enthusiasm for humanity is uppermost in our thought. We are seeking to interpret his life in terms of institutions of mercy and help and in all sorts of effort for human betterment. We feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the afflicted.

We are thinking of him as the *authoritative Teacher* whose divine word is to be obeyed not only by the individual in his personal relationships but by society in its commercial and industrial relations, and by governments in their dealings with one another. We believe that he claims the right to rule over every aspect of life. If the social interpretation of his message is

prominent in our thought to-day, it is not because we have forgotten the personal meaning of that message. It is simply because the new social consciousness of men is seeking to interpret Christ in this larger and wider way.

After all, it is not the particular terms we apply to Jesus nor the formulas in which we express our belief in him that are most important. The vital need is still an *experience of Christ*. That is the main thing and as always it must precede any adequate interpretation of him. This is the method by which we have acquired all the truth we possess. Will certain foods nourish the body? Only by trying them can we discover it. Will certain roads lead us to a particular destination? It is only by following them that we can discover. Will Christ satisfy the deepest needs of the world and bring the new and better order for which we devoutly hope and pray? There is no way of determining this without making the adventure. Paul assures us that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." He had found this absolutely true in his own experience. Millions of other individuals have discovered the same truth for themselves. It remains for all skeptics to try the same course. Not without experiencing Christ can any man come to any authoritative

conviction about Christ. It is a great adventure of the spirit both for the individual and for society, this trusting of ourselves to the will and the way of Christ.

Principal Shairp has summed it up in these words which are always worth quoting :

“I have a life in Christ to live,
 But till I live it must I wait
 Till learning can clear answer give
 To this and that book’s date?
 I have a life in Christ to live,
 I have a death in Christ to die.
 But must I wait till science give
 All doubts a full reply?

“Nay! Rather, while a sea of doubt
 Is raging wildly round about,
 Questioning of life and death and sin,
 Let me but creep within
 Thy fold, O Christ, and at thy feet
 Take but the lowest seat
 And hear thine awful voice repeat
 In gentlest accent, heavenly sweet,
 ‘Come unto me and rest;
 Believe me and be blest!’ ”

CHAPTER III

THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST TO-DAY

“By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?”

We are still asking these questions concerning Christ, and it is clear that the older answers are not altogether satisfactory to the modern mind.

Sixteen hundred years ago the Emperor Constantine summoned the first general council of the Christian Church. Heated discussions concerning the nature and authority of Christ had engendered such enmities that the unity of the empire was threatened. As a matter of public policy, if for no other reason, it seemed wise to bring the leaders of the church together and formulate some acceptable standard of belief.

The Council held its sessions in the emperor's summer palace at Nicæa, in the province of Bithynia. Three hundred and eighteen bishops with their attendants were present. They came from all parts of the empire—as far west as Cordova in Spain, as far north as Gaul, from North Africa, and the larger number from the eastern provinces to which the place of meeting was more accessible.

The church had only just emerged from its

period of fiery persecution. Numbers of those present actually bore in their bodies the marks of their physical suffering for Christ's sake. One of them had lost the use of both hands through the application of hot irons, another had lost an eye, another an arm. They were indeed, as Theodoret has reported, an assembly of martyrs.

At the opening session the emperor presided, tall and stately and gorgeously attired, making a deep impression. He pointed out the need of unity. For two months the discussions went on. It is sometimes called "the battle of the iota," for it was only a single Greek letter that seemed to stand between the two points of view. Was Christ *homo ousios* or *homoi ousios*? That is, was he of the same substance with the Father or of similar substance with the Father?

In the end Arius and his followers were defeated and the creed of Athanasius was adopted as the standardized faith of the Christian Church. In its statement of belief, the Council was very explicit concerning the nature of Christ's authority. "God of God, Light of Light, very God of Very God."

Far be it from me to belittle the Council of Nicæa or to treat lightly the "Battle of the Iota." There was a vital issue there which meant much to the Christian movement. But it is perfectly clear that the authority of Christ for

this present age does not depend upon the creed of Nicæa or any other creed. The modern mind, especially the Occidental mind with its practical tendencies, cares very little about creeds or formulas of any kind. Yet I venture to say there is a more serious interest in Jesus to-day than in any other age, and people are asking with a new and deeper interest, "Who is Jesus? What is his worth and meaning for our lives to-day? By what authority does he ask for our allegiance? By what authority does he claim that our lives, our institutions, our governments should be controlled by his spirit and his principles?"

The old answers, I say, to these questions will not do. Political leaders know how difficult it is to hold the allegiance of the masses of men to-day to any political formula. Religious leaders throughout the world find it increasingly difficult to do so. We are no longer willing to accept the *ipse dixit* of any individual or group who get together and say, "Go to, now, let us interpret the mind of God for the rest of the world." No ready-made formulas, however ancient and honorable, are we inclined to accept without scrutiny. No preacher robed in gown and bands can any longer dominate our thinking unless his evangel is bathed in the passion and fire of his own godly life and comes to us with

the authority of personal character. The old-fashioned high pulpit still to be seen in some of the older New England churches, entered by a private door from the chancel and reached by the *scala sancta* which the foot of the profane trembled to violate, is no longer typical of the isolated and infallible authority of the minister or the creed which he represents.

"The lay mind," as Principal Jacks has suggested, "has definitely passed beyond clerical control." There is plenty of evidence of this, not only in the more liberal churches of Protestantism but even in the older and more authoritative organizations of the Greek and Roman churches. Indeed, the whole religious world feels the effect of this new impulse of "self-determination." Even Mohammedanism has its Fundamentalists and Modernists, as the recent trial for heresy of a well-known scholar and writer of Islam bears witness.

No, people are now learning to use their own eyes in their search for God rather than the ill-matched lenses of an ecclesiastical binocular handed to them by the church. They are ceasing to think of Christ and his religion in terms of any of our recognized "isms." They are feeling about for a more vital basis of faith than any formula has furnished.

If we are to have a living faith in Jesus Christ

to-day, it will be based not upon the creed of Nicæa, not upon any collection of proof-texts, but upon *the spiritual values which he represents and upon his satisfactory reading for us of the meaning of life*. If he has authority for us, it will be because his words find us, show us ourselves and reveal ultimate meanings and values as do the words of no other teacher.

Here is the bed rock for our modern faith in Christ. He is for us the one satisfactory clue not only to the goal of life but also to the source of life. That is, he interprets for us not only man's noblest being but also that mystery of existence of which we are a part.

The quest of humanity is a double one. First, we are seeking for the pattern of an ideal life; that is, the kind of person we ought to be and want to be. It would be difficult to find one who is perfectly satisfied with himself and who is this moment all he knows he ought to be. There is a divine discontent in most of us. It is indeed the stimulus that keeps us going.

“Beyond the east the sunrise,
Beyond the west the sea,
And east and west the wanderlust
That will not let me be.
It works on me like magic
To make me say ‘Good-by,’
For the seas call and the stars call,
And, Oh! the call of the sky!”

Instinctively from childhood we are always trying to reach out a little farther, to know a little more, to better our condition if only by a trifle. We want to be like others who have reached a higher level of comfort or wisdom or character. In them the ideal breaks through and for a moment, at least, they become our heroes. Every small boy wants to be like his father. Every youth has his ideal character.

But most of these temporary goals are passed in our endeavor. We come up with them, and immediately they lose their value for us. Others on closer inspection prove to be unworthy of further devotion and are abandoned. A part of the painful disillusioning process of life is the discovery of imperfections in our ideals.

On the confused and blotted pages of human history there is only one Life that has never been thus surpassed or given cause for disappointment. It is not merely that he is better and wiser than other men. His excellence in this respect is not comparative. It is absolute. In him truth, beauty, goodness are ultimate. In his consciousness there appears to be no sense of what we call sin or failure. He was meek and lowly of heart but out of his eyes there looked a moral challenge to all the world. He taught others to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses," but he never knelt beside them to utter a *miserere*

for himself. He never went back to correct himself. How constantly we have to do that! How frequently we say the wrong word or do the wrong thing and are compelled to patch up and reconstruct and smooth over our resultant failures!

He was the master of every situation. He was never embarrassed. He was never caught off his guard. He always knew what to say and what to do. His reading of human nature was perfect. He knew what was in man. His insight into events was clear. In the matching of wits he was so far the intellectual superior of his contemporaries that their brightest minds were like candles in contrast with the sun. His life was the perfect embodiment of love, crowned by the highest possible expression of self-sacrificing devotion. The best of men are not in his class and, as far as we can see, he is never likely to be outgrown. Where can we find such another character?

When we go back then to the source of the stream of Christian influence, what do we find? Not a formulated creed; not an ecclesiastical organization, not a new code of laws or an elaborate ritual. None of these things were present at the beginning. We do find, however, this radiant and illuminating personality binding men to himself with the cords of personal devo-

tion, and exercising an authority born of his own embodiment of truth, beauty, and goodness.

The second item in this double quest of humanity is a search for the secret of the universe, for some sort of satisfactory interpretation of the confused and tangled processes of life. Why are we here anyway? What is the meaning of the strangely mingled experiences that go to make up our existence? Work, sin, joy and sorrow, laughter and tears, victory and defeat, love and hate, hope and fear—how tangled are the threads of the fabric and what pattern are we weaving?

We are weary sometimes of studying facts and long for meanings and values. Who has not found himself wondering: "What's it all for? What's the value of it all?"

The questions which people most need to have answered for their own peace of mind are not always those which fill the largest amount of space in public print and discussion. They are not immediately related to problems of social, political, or industrial reform. They are questions which ask themselves in the heart of every man, rich or poor, wise or foolish, ancient or modern—questions concerning this strange life of ours. What is the meaning of our existence anyway? What is the end of these strange processes of life? This everlasting necessity of

work; this going forth in the morning to earn our bread by the sweat of our brow; this coming home in the evening with hands scarred where the tools have slipped and hurt, calloused by the grip of the helve, stained by the pitch of the timber. This multiplication of wealth which brings with it a thickening of responsibility and care until we seem to be possessed and driven mad by the things which we possess. What does it mean? This ceaseless necessity of never-ending tasks which seem to stand between us and the highest achievements of our spirits. And this sin of the world which spreads like a fatal contagion—the sinner himself may repent in dust and ashes but the effects of his sin are not thereby silenced. They go on scorching and blighting human life through all the years to come. Why do we sin? Why are we tempted, and why must the innocent suffer with the guilty? The bit of ribbon fluttering from the doorway telling us that the silver cord is loosed, the golden bowl broken and that man has gone to his long home from whence there is no return. What does it mean anyway? Why do we suffer? Why are we sick? Why do we grow old? Why do we die? These and a thousand such questions clamor for an answer.

What we need for our peace of mind is some sort of satisfactory explanation. All that is

necessary to reconcile us to work, sin, sorrow, and death is a glint of its meaning.

Salvation in nontheological terms means the attainment of that inner attitude of adjustment to life and destiny which brings with it peace, harmony, and confidence. Such salvation depends upon an intelligent, satisfying interpretation of the mystery of existence.

Christ is the clue. He offers the most satisfactory interpretation of the meaning of life that has ever been suggested by any teacher ancient or modern. The background of it all, he assures us, is love and goodness which can be best interpreted by a father's feeling for his children; enfolding all is this fatherly intelligence and will. The universe in which we live is our Father's house, and life itself is a process of going to the Father. The goal of the process is the complete rule of this Father's will in the life of man.

Here, then, is the double answer to our quest. What ought men to be like? Why, like Christ. What is the ideal order of society? Why, a society made up of individuals who are Christlike. And what is God like? Why, again, he is like Christ. The meaning, the end, the purpose of the whole scheme of things is Christlikeness. "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." For we can conceive of nothing higher or finer than

to be like Him who is the absolute embodiment of truth, beauty, and goodness.

We love and follow him for what he is, not because of what any creed or church or external authority may say about him. On this basis is the only hope of Christian unity, or, indeed, of world unity. If we insist upon devising a political, social, or religious formula which will claim the allegiance of all men everywhere, we have before us an impossible task. But if we can lift up a radiant Soul who will win men by the sheer charm and beauty of his life, there is at least a prospect that he will bring all men unto himself.

Many diverse types of humanity have given to Jesus the place of spiritual lordship in their lives and no more compelling authority can be asked than that of One who embodies in himself the truth we seek, the beauty we admire, and the goodness of a perfect soul.

We *feel* the difference between such an one and all others even though we cannot satisfactorily define it. We agree with Charles Lamb's famous remark: "If Shakespeare should enter this room, we would rise respectfully to receive him. But if Jesus Christ should enter, we would fall on our knees in adoration."

CHAPTER IV

KNOWING THE MIND OF CHRIST TO-DAY

How may we know what the mind of Christ is for our own day and generation?

To know the mind of any individual is a difficult matter. I may recognize the title and binding of a book which I have seen lying upon a table, yet know nothing of its contents. I may be familiar with the external appearance of many of the buildings in the city and still be quite ignorant of what goes on within their walls. That is the way most of us know one another. We are familiar with name and face, with street and number only. It is a rare thing for one of us to know another so intimately that he can anticipate his thought or interpret with any authority his outlook upon life.

Most of us are too busy to know one another that way. It takes time, study, intimacy, and deepening devotion before one can claim to know and interpret the mind of another. I suppose Boswell's life of Dr. Johnson is one of the most exhaustive efforts that has ever been attempted to represent the mind and thought of another. But if you have the patience to read it through,

you put it down with the conviction that even the faithful Boswell was too flippant and superficial really to understand and interpret so great a mind as that of Samuel Johnson.

The mind of Christ cannot be got at artificially or mechanically. We already have seen how emphatically the present keen generation has revolted against any arbitrary or external authority which seeks to interpret for us the mind of the Infinite.

The mind of Christ can only be known in the same way that you come to know the mind of your most intimate friend. That is, through sacrificial surrender, identifying your interests with his interests, and by that growing sympathy which makes you as accurately responsive as a delicate instrument to the slightest suggestion of his thought and feeling.

In the early part of the seventeenth century there lived in the city of Seville in Spain a youth who was fired with ambition to be an artist. He became the pupil of Murillo. In his studio he surrendered himself with complete abandon to the master's teaching. Through long years of study and application he sought to enter into the secrets of the craft. He did this with such success that at length the mind that was in his master was also in him. The public came to recognize him as a worthy disciple and perpet-

uator of the spirit of his master's art. In recognition of this fact he was asked at Murillo's death to complete some of his master's unfinished works. Many of his pictures can be distinguished from those of Murillo himself only with the greatest difficulty. One of these hangs among the pictures in the Gallery of Sacred Art at Hennepin Avenue Church, Minneapolis. For a long time it was mistaken for a Murillo. Only the most careful critics discovered that it is the work of Francisco Menesses, this devoted pupil, in whom the mind of the master dwelt with such completeness. So it is with knowing the mind of Christ.

To be sure, there are memorable hours in our experience when we are face to face with some deep and profound emotion of life. Then it seems as though some unseen hand drew aside a curtain. As in a flash the Mind of the Master appears clear to us. But aside from these rare moments of inspiration, our knowledge of the Mind of Christ is dependent upon the completeness of our surrender and obedience to him and upon the strength of our settled purpose to think his thoughts after him.

To be more specific, how may we come to know the mind of Christ? The simplest answer to that question is so elemental that an appalling number of people ignore it. We must familiarize

ourselves with the accepted records of his life and teaching. If you purpose to study and interpret the mind of some man who has wrought well in human affairs during recent years, you will gather together his books and his letters. Every scrap of paper upon which he ever penned a thought will become important to you. You will interview his friends and neighbors and collect every anecdote connected with his life. Then, having assembled all the available material, you will make it your business so to familiarize yourself with it that you can enter into his thought, get his outlook upon life and affairs, and thus fit yourself to interpret his mind with authority.

There is an immediately available source for the study of the mind of Christ. How many followers of Christ honestly make it the business of their lives to study and interpret his mind as there revealed? We need to be called back to the New Testament and to the habit of intelligent Bible study.

An Englishman has recently asserted that the number of persons in his country who can really be called Bible students is less than two thousand out of forty-two millions of inhabitants. Whatever exaggeration there may be in the statement, it is certain that the multiplied activities of modern life have almost robbed the

rank and file of Christian people of the familiarity with the New Testament which is essential to any intelligent understanding of the spirit and principles of Christian living. Our inconsistency at this point is amazing. The importance which we profess to attach to Christ's life and teaching is not paralleled by any corresponding thoroughness in our knowledge of the records of his life.

Granted a knowledge of the New Testament, what are the general characteristics of the mind of Christ as there revealed?

First: He saw life clearly and he saw it as a whole and so was lifted above confusion, prejudice, and despair. We have brief moments of such vision and know the value of them, but with him it was a continuous mental state. To us life seems for the most part like the unrelated fragments of a jig-saw puzzle, but to his view they were all fitted into place, producing a complete and harmonious whole. We lack perspective and are so blinded by the dust of the street where we live that we cannot see the horizons, but before his vision the whole landscape of life unfolded itself in proper relationships. His mind rested upon the quiet assurance that the world ground is good. Back of it all there is an Infinite intelligence and will which is fatherly in its attitude toward us. It has been said that the

chief function of religion is to make men feel at home in the Universe. Judged by this point of view, Jesus is the supreme religious mind of the ages, for the world was his Father's house and life itself was a process of going to the Father.

Then, too, he conceived everything in its relation to the spirit of man rather than in relation to his body and the physical framework of the universe. All final values with him were inner spiritual values. Our time is largely concerned with planning for physical comfort and immediate reward. But he regarded everything in the light of its effect upon the soul and the ultimate reward of character which it might bring.

Again, Jesus thought of all human relationships in terms of love and service. Something of what this means we have worked out in the narrower circle of the Christian family. But Jesus had worked it out in his own thought for the whole human race, and while we apply the principle to a few personal and immediate associations, he applied it in his thought to all relationships.

But this is not enough. Supposing we *do* go back to the New Testament, what do we find? We discover that the life of Jesus was lived under conditions prevalent nearly two thousand

years ago and vastly different from conditions to-day. The complex and tangled situations of modern life were absent. Human relationships were comparatively simple. All the mechanical accompaniments of the industrial age were lacking. Strikes, labor unions, corporations were unknown.

Means of communication were primitive. Although the Romans had tied the Mediterranean world together with roads and an elaborate system of imperial authority, still travel was difficult, interchange of thought moved slowly, and social relationships and duties were elemental as compared with the intricacies of social organization to-day.

The machinery of recreation had not been developed. Thrills, excitements, and sensations were few and primitive rather than multiplied and mechanical. The speed of the world was measured by the speed of the horse and the camel. The contrast with the conditions of our own time needs only to be suggested. The mind of Christ as it applied to the conditions of his own generation is not quite enough for our guidance to-day.

To meet the present need there must be added to our actual knowledge of the content of his thought the gifts of spiritual imagination and a growing Christian consciousness.

Take an illustration that the golfer will appreciate. In your drive you have taken your eye off the ball and as a consequence have lost it in the rough. You cannot find it after diligent search. Might it not be wise to go back to the spot from which you drove the ball, make your swing again and follow the ball through? Something like that we need to-day in our effort to interpret the mind of Christ for our own generation.

If we go back to the New Testament, we will find there certain conceptions of God and man and their relations to one another. We will find there certain inward attitudes and principles of conduct all of which are of permanent worth. But to bring them up to date we must follow them through, visualizing for ourselves the spirit and principles of Jesus as they relate to present conditions and situations.

Take a single example. We in the United States are fairly steeped in prosperity just now and our emphasis is naturally on the value of material civilization. I do not mean that this is a new emphasis in human experience. It is as old as the beginnings of society, but it was never so exaggerated and complex as it is now and here. No land was ever blessed, or cursed, with greater wealth than ours. We have an economic grip on nearly thirty nations who must

render tribute to us throughout the life of this and probably the next generation.

Can we think of Jesus in immediate relation to our vast financial and material resources without hearing him say with much more significance than he said two thousand years ago, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul," that is, his own inward power of appreciating and understanding and appropriating life? He certainly would remind us, soaked in prosperity as we are, that our life does not consist in the abundance of the things that we possess, and that it is more difficult for men who are immersed in material interests and overburdened with the anxieties of wealth and organization to enter into the spirit of the Kingdom than it is for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.

There is, then, a growing Christian consciousness in the souls of those who make it the business of their lives to understand his will. If you are an employer of labor and are facing the perplexing questions which confront all who are involved in modern industrial conditions, and if you have made it first of all your business to understand the mind of Christ as it has to do with man's relation to man in society, it will be borne in upon you, in proportion to the completeness of your own surrender and devo-

tion, what the will of the Master may be for you in these peculiar relationships. You will not be influenced primarily by motives of greed or selfishness, but by principles of love and justice which Christ enunciated.

If you are a wage-earner and feel the pull of this mighty movement toward a larger measure of industrial freedom and opportunity, if you have made it the business of your life first of all to know and understand the mind of Christ as it relates to you, it will be revealed to you with growing conviction. You will not find yourself carried hither and thither by the storm of passion and prejudice, even in the face of injustice. With growing sympathy with him will come an appreciation of his principles of equity upon which this whole matter must be finally determined.

If you are a quiet home-maker, disturbed by the common annoyances of domestic life, unruly children, difficult servants, and the like, an hour spent every day in the quiet determination to know the mind of Christ as it relates to the family, children, servants, and other domestic problems, will richly repay the time spent in such devotion.

So it may be indeed with all. The days of revelation are not ended, and the mind of Christ is still made clear to those who will take the

trouble to understand. You may answer that all this involves an expenditure of time and devotion of which you are scarcely capable. Of course it will. Anything that we make the business of our lives takes time and strength and self-surrender. But this is the one thing needful just now. There is no mechanical or artificial way out of our difficulties. No new system of social or political organization will permanently remedy our situation. It is a *different spirit* that is needed; it is a matter of mental attitudes and that will come only from practicing the presence of Christ.

CHAPTER V

THE MODERN MEANING OF SIN AND SAVIOUR

“BEHOLD the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

These words do not have the same content for us that they had for the people of the first century. We have lost the background.

There is a law of the mind's action which we call the association of ideas. Such is the convenience and comfort of our modern homes that I can enter an unlighted house, press my finger on a button in the wall and instantly many lights are kindled all about me.

The house of our minds has something of the same arrangement. It is so constructed that a single word or phrase, or even an odor or a note of music, will kindle a whole group of ideas associated with that word, odor or note of music.

An old man is sitting by an open window through which the breath of summer blows the fragrance of June roses. Instantly his thoughts are on the wing. The walls of the room dissolve about him. He is far away. He sees, nestled among the hills, a cottage over which June roses

are climbing. He hears a song coming from its open door. He sees himself returning from his day's work in the field with eager step. He is living over again the experience of his youth, and all because of the fragrance of June roses.

If I speak in your hearing the words "Bunker Hill," immediately a group of ideas and pictures are suggested in your consciousness. Perhaps you see a tall stone shaft which marks the spot, or possibly you are thinking of a rounded hill on whose crest our forefathers in knickerbockers and quaint cocked hats are waiting behind a shallow barricade for the attack of a line of red-coats coming slowly up the slope. Back of these pictures there is in your thought the whole group of ideas connected with the founding of the republic.

Supposing, however, we assume that there are those present who have only recently become Americans. They know nothing of our history and are not at all acquainted with the story of our beginnings. To them the words "Bunker Hill" will suggest no such association of ideas. They do not have the background and would therefore not appreciate the significance of the phrase.

It is much the same with this sentence which John the Baptist uttered that morning by the river bank when he pointed to Jesus and said,

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” In the minds of the people who heard him the words would suggest the familiar background of the Temple courts, thronged with reverent worshipers, at the hour of the evening sacrifice or during Passover week. They would hear the chant of priests. They would see the ascending smoke of the fire upon the altar where the unblemished lamb was offered as a sacrifice for the sins of the people. Back of that picture was the long history of such symbols and rites of worship.

We have lost that background. We are far removed from smoking altars and bleeding sacrifices and all the ceremonies of Temple courts.

But this is not so serious a matter. We can easily find more modern terms in which to convey the same truth. There is, however, a more vital question. Have we really lost the sense of sin against which this sacrificial symbolism of the lamb and the altar was but a shadow? If so, it may be serious matter for our generation.

It must be quite clear to all that if we have not lost the sense of sin we have certainly changed our mode of thinking about it. It does not mean to us what it meant to our forefathers. Our sins do not trouble us overmuch. Our wrongdoings do not seem to bother us as they did the earlier generations. We do feel regret

over mistakes and shortcomings and some human actions impress us as being disgusting and un-aesthetic, but our sins are not the burden to us that they were to our forefathers.

There is a quaint story of Jesuit missionaries who were working among the Indians in Canada in the early days of American history. They sent home to France for pictures and cartoons that might be used in presenting their messages, and they suggested that "of souls in bliss one will be enough, but of souls in perdition many are to be sent, for they will be useful." If we were giving such directions to-day, we would reverse the order; of souls in perdition one would be enough but of souls in bliss many would be welcome. Such is the changed emphasis of our teaching.

I am not passing judgment now upon this change of emphasis, I am simply stating the fact.

Are there reasons for this changed attitude on our part? I think there are some perfectly natural ones. The spread of education and the more general diffusion of knowledge have had much to do with eliminating the motive of fear. The fears of ignorant and superstitious people are powerful forces in controlling conduct, but in this period of general education and enlightenment it is quite possible, as William James once remarked, for large numbers to pass from the

cradle to the grave without experiencing a single pang of genuine fear. Science, medicine, surgery, and education are all busy at the task of eliminating the sources of dread and removing the torturing fears of humanity. It is a very laudable and praiseworthy movement in which we are all interested. It is quite natural, in view of this, that fear as a motive in religion should be largely diminished.

There is another reason. Wisely or unwisely, in our modern thinking, we have transferred much of the responsibility of the individual to society. People no longer stand upon their own feet as in the older thinking but are, rather, what their group has made them. They are the product of inheritance, training, and environment. Their sins are not so much the outcome of their own corrupted wills as they are the result of imperfect social organization. When an individual commits a crime or makes a moral misstep, we are quite likely to smooth over the situation with the assumption that he is the victim of social maladjustment. It is possible that we have gone too far in this direction. Personally I think we have. I am inclined to be an individualist in my own thinking. I doubt if society ever forced any individual to do wrong without a measure of his own consent. Individual responsibility needs to be reemphasized. Some-

where between individualism and socialized thinking there is a true and happy medium but just now we have swung too far toward the social pole.

We need perhaps a restatement of the meaning of sin in modern terms. Let me make first a negative statement, for I can at least tell you one thing that sin is not. In the words of Dean Inge, one of the most vigorous of our modern religious thinkers, sin is "not merely imperfection in the process of being worked out." But that is exactly the idea of sin that most of us have unconsciously adopted. That is what you think sin is this morning. The lust, the passion, the hate which works such havoc in human life is merely the remnants of our animal inheritance which we are slowly ridding ourselves of in the long upward climb. It is the ape and the tiger in us that has not yet been tamed.

In those four great zones of sculpture which guarded Arthur's hall at Camelot there were set forth in mystic symbols the steps of man's conquest of himself.

"In the first beasts are slaying men
And in the second men are slaying beasts
And in the third are warriors, perfect men,
And in the fourth are men with growing
wings."

That suggests the upward climb of the human

spirit to preeminence. There is an automatic spring in the universe which will lift us in due time to that angelic stage of growing wings.

It is a false interpretation of evolution perhaps that has given us this easy-going conception of sin. At least evolution gets the blame for it from some of our brethren. But rightly understood evolution teaches us no such thing. It teaches, rather, the tragedy of degeneration and of reversal to type which is very much in harmony with that conception of the seriousness of sin which you will find in the New Testament.

In the long run we may believe in the ultimate triumph of good over evil and still believe tremendously in the corrupting power of sin on our personal lives and on the generation to which we belong. Jesus, as Dean Inge again points out, draws a sharp distinction between the sin and the imperfection of men. With the shortcomings of people he was very patient. He bore with the arrogant boastfulness and even the treachery of Peter; he suffered the stubborn dullness of his disciples who could not seem to understand his meaning although repeated lessons were presented.

But, to sin against the standard of personal righteousness in one's life—it were better to cut off one's hand or pluck out one's eye than to do that. Or to sin against the standard of social

righteousness by causing even the least of God's children to stumble and fall, it were better to have a millstone hung about one's neck and to be drowned in the midst of the sea.

What is sin, then, in more affirmative terms? When it is tracked home to our innermost being it is a *malignant inward malady*. It is an unsound and untrue mental attitude. It is a serious maladjustment which needs correction or healing as surely as some malformation in our physical frame. It is a disease of the spirit as certainly as tuberculosis is a disease of the body. The people among whom Jesus lived, his contemporaries, assumed that sin was the breaking of some rule or regulation, the omission of a rite or ceremony, the neglect of some ritual requirement. Jesus said: "You are all wrong. Sin does not consist in those outward and incidental matters. It is an affair of the inner life, for it is from within, out of the heart, that there proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, murders, thefts." In emphasizing the same aspect of sin he suggested that murder was not merely the outward act which resulted in the death of another. The heart and core of it was in the inward attitude toward other people which permitted one to call his brother a fool. The root of it was a fundamental lack of respect for a human life and regard for personality. If your attitude

toward other people, other races, is one of contempt and scorn, if you do not respect the infinite value of a human soul, then the root of every violent evil deed and outward cruelty is in your being.

Another aspect of sin is its *transgression of law*. I am not thinking now of any arbitrary legislation created by man or any set of rules ordered for the regulation of society. I am thinking of that body of eternal law which is built into the very structure of the universe. God did not make it. It is what God is. It is the expression of his character. It is part of the eternal order of things. It lies at the basis of all constitutions, all governments, all expressions of authority, and all legislation of men and is, therefore, older and profounder than any of these. Perhaps the most concrete embodiment of it is in the Ten Commandments, but they do not exhaust its meaning.

Now we cannot play with that kind of fundamental principle. We are indifferent to it at our peril. A recent example of what I mean is the appeal of some ultra-liberal moderns for a new and broader standard of sex morality which would permit promiscuous relations and more general indulgence of lusts. Such persons do not seem to realize that they are meddling with the very foundations of the whole structure of

organized society. They are suggesting that which would not merely allow sexual license. It would not stop there. It would also eat out the basis of mutual trust, destroy the ground of confidence and, if carried to its extreme, make impossible mutual or cooperative effort in business, society, and government. The horror of the degenerate consequences we cannot picture. It would cause us to revert to the wild unorganized life of the herd. This is the work of sin.

Slavery is still another aspect of this matter. Economically and politically we are constantly striving for a larger measure of freedom but sin is forever undoing our work. For the worst possible bondage is not that of outward control but of inward serfdom, and we have only to look around us to find everywhere the slavery of passion, lust, and greed.

My thought goes back to a boyhood acquaintance. A genial and friendly lad whose one moral weakness was the desire to get something for nothing and who was always plotting some sly and cunning game by which he could extract from somebody a value for which he had given no equivalent. That false inward attitude fastened itself upon his life until it became his dominant and controlling motive. The story of his career, as nearly as I have been able to follow it, has been the working out of this mistaken idea.

The ultimate meaning of sin is *isolation*. It breaks the adjustment between ourselves and the universe. It is separation from God. It is also separation from society. All criminals are not in the penitentiary, but they are isolated from their fellows by an invisible wall of cleavage which they themselves have built. If no human authority lays its hand upon them, they are still made cowards and outcasts either by an individual standard of righteousness or a social standard which they have violated. Destiny itself is against them. The stars fought against Sisera, and the night into which Judas went from his wrongdoing must have seemed to him as black as hell.

Is not sin in every sense in which we have just described it universally prevalent? Is there anyone who can deny its existence as a blistering, blighting curse upon our generation? Are not its slaves in all our cities, many of them with the brand of their master in their faces? Are not its outcasts on the fringes of all social groups? Are not all our institutions, however worthy in their purpose, marred, weakened, and hampered by its presence?

How, then, in modern terms can Jesus still take away the sin of the world? What is the meaning of that phrase for us? I certainly cannot exhaust its meaning in anything that I

shall say, for the simple reason that it is a very intimate and personal experience which will have a somewhat different meaning to every soul that has felt his healing touch. I can only suggest from my own observation and experience what it seems to mean to me; and I might add that all theology and creedal statements are for this reason inadequate and incomplete.

The process as suggested to my mind is first of all the erecting of a standard of personal and social righteousness which no one who has come in contact with Jesus can thereafter possibly evade.

Recently a certain church installed a system by which its exterior was flood-lighted at night until it stands out almost as brightly as in the sunlight. No one can come into the circle of that white light without being pricked out into the clearest prominence. So no one can come into the circle of Christ's character without realizing what it would be to live without sin; so white is that standard that every stain appears. Never thereafter can we be without a consciousness of what personal life and social character could be, if it were only Christlike. Just as Raphael and Titian and Angelo have set the standard for artists, just as Handel, Mozart and Beethoven have set the standard for musicians, so Christ has set the standard of character for the world.

If he had done only this, however, it would be most disheartening. The contrast is so strong that it appalls. But he does infinitely more. When accepted as Saviour he also changes that false, unsound inward attitude, correcting its maladjustment and giving to us what the Bible calls "a new heart." No one can accept Christ—his interpretation of life, his conception of God's character, his standard of duty, his estimate of our relations with one another in society, in a word, himself—without such a change of inward attitude as will assure approximate righteousness of outward conduct.

From Doctor Glover's stimulating book entitled *Jesus in the Experience of Men* I have taken this illustration which may help us to see more clearly what Christ does for our sin.

"Some years ago it was discovered that the cotton crop in Egypt was failing. A parasite was destroying the plant. A botanist was sent out from England. After a long series of experiments he discovered that at a certain temperature the parasite flourished and the plant died. If this temperature was raised the parasite died and the plant flourished. After a while he was able to tell the farmers of Egypt where the trouble was. They were irrigating too much. The soil was kept moist and cold with the water and the roots of the plant were chilled and the

parasite was correspondingly busy. Acting on this advice, they rearranged their irrigation plans, kept the soil warmer and the parasite disappeared.”¹

In some such way Christ changes the temperature of our lives and the parasite of sin disappears. This is the process of regeneration by which we come to think of God, of life, of duty and of human relationships as Christ thought of them and by a law of human nature we come to be outwardly in word and act and look more Christlike. “But we, all, . . . beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory.” “As a man thinketh in his heart so is he.”

There is a final word to be added here. Christ brings us home to God where we belong. We are never completely happy when we are away from the place where we naturally and rightfully belong. Sin creates a chasm of separation which isolates us from the comfort of our Father’s house and the love of our Father’s heart. Christ bridges the chasm. He readjusts that severed harmony. He brings back that sense of connection and cooperation with the ultimate intelligence and righteous will which lies back of everything.

¹ Reprinted from *Jesus in the Experience of Men*, by T. R. Glover. Copyright, 1926. Published by George H. Doran Company.

Here is a boy who has run away from home in search of freedom. After a period of loneliness and disappointment, he comes to himself as did the prodigal in the story. He says, "I will arise and go to my father." One night he comes creeping back into the little town. He does not go boldly to the door as in the old days before his own willful act had broken his connection with the home. From the shadows he gazes in through the lighted windows wondering if there is still a welcome. Has he not forfeited the right to be there at all? Are they still interested in him? Do they miss him? Will they really be glad to see him? But just then he catches a glimpse of an empty chair at the table as though placed there against his coming, or his mother comes to the window and looks out as though she were still expecting his return, or she lights a candle and places it where its warm gleam shines out upon the path—as if to assure him that welcome is still there. These incidental evidences that he is still loved and cared for, perhaps they will be the means of his redemption.

So as we come creeping back from our weary wanderings, conscious of the isolation and loneliness of sin-stained souls, as we gaze wistfully into the windows of our heavenly Father's house, wondering if there is an infinite Love that cares, if we can only see some evidence of such a

patient, suffering love—a cross perhaps uplifted against the sunset sky—that might be the means of our restoration to the harmony of the Eternal purpose.

Is there anywhere such an evidence that God loves? Yes, that is the heart of the message of the gospel. Jesus Christ is the love of God; he is the beauty of God; he is the mercy of God; he is the character of God brought near to you through a true and proper son of man, a fellow nature with your own and therefore capable of sympathy and saviourhood.

The greatest need of the world is not primarily a reorganization of society or readjustment of government. It will not permanently help matters for the under dog to become the upper dog nor will any mere leveling process producing a mechanical equality reach the seat of our difficulty. It is a new heart and a new attitude that we need.

This is such an intimate and personal thing that only a supreme personality can best communicate it to us. In this deepest ethical need, it is an Infinite Friend that we most crave.

What is it that happens in the life of a man when he really loves a good woman? What is it that transforms his self-seeking and directs it into a channel of domestic love and service? What happens again in his life when he holds

in his arms a little child—his own and hers? How is the miracle wrought by these baby hands which transforms the careless heart of the man into the warm heart of the father?

Something like this, only on a higher and diviner scale, happens in our lives with the coming in of Christ. He is still the Saviour of the World; the only Physician who gives any promise of so changing the inward ethical attitude of men that the outward and social expression of our lives may become redeemed in righteousness, justice and truth.

CHAPTER VI

APPLYING THE ETHICS OF CHRIST TO-DAY

THERE are some heartening things that are beginning to emerge from the welter of the world's confusion. Against the gloomy background of unsatisfactory political and social conditions and disturbing questions that provoke unrest, it is reassuring to discover that men are asking with new seriousness whether the teaching of Jesus has actual value for modern life.

A group of famous authors have recently taken the public into their confidence through the columns of a London morning paper. They were invited by the editor to tell the world what they thought about religion. The fact that the circulation of the paper began to rise at once is an indication that the practical interest in religion is very vital.

Arnold Bennett has little use for creeds but he is all for Christ, who taught men humility, meekness, and forgiveness of enemies, the return of good for evil—in short, the religion of kindness. Hugh Walpole has discovered in the teaching of Christ, stripped of dogma, a message of

amazing wisdom and knowledge and applicable to modern conditions. J. D. Beresford thinks that the ethics of Christ are beyond all comparison the most admirable rules of life.

Are his principles workable? Can we take them seriously as a way out of our tangled human relationships? And if the ideas of Jesus were actually applied to present conditions, if we dared really to venture ourselves upon his program, would a better order of things result? Thoughtful men and women in increasing numbers are asking these questions. They are getting together in groups and conferences to discuss the feasibility of a Christian social order. They are trying to find out just what such an order would mean. They are attempting to visualize for themselves and for others a Christian society in which the will of God would be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

There are several ways of disposing of this fundamental question. First, there are those who frankly believe that the teaching of Jesus is not workable at all. If you should ask them, "What think ye of Christ?" they would reply with Renan, "He was a dreamer, an impractical idealist." His principles are impossible of application. For example, his doctrine of non-resistance, his exhortation to love and good will would vitiate courage, manliness, and strength.

The doctrine of hate and the will to power are far more necessary to preserve what is best in human experience. His economic teaching would undermine thrift and sap the sources of the wealth and power of nations. Indeed, if generally applied, his teaching would disintegrate society and blow our existing institutions to atoms.

It is rather curious that this point of view is held to-day by two radically different groups. On the one hand there are those intense individualists, apostles of imperialism and autocratic power, who believe that Christianity, if generally applied, would weaken authority and make the development of superman and supernations impossible. On the other hand, there are those, represented by the followers of Karl Marx, who believe that the Christian emphasis upon the importance of the individual and its insistence upon unseen rather than tangible values is a decided obstacle in the realization of state Socialism. Both groups, I suppose, would agree with Nietzsche in saying that "Christianity is the most stupid of all heresies."

Secondly: There are those who insist that the teaching of Jesus is to be literally obeyed. They tell us he meant exactly what he said. Nothing is to be explained away. When he taught men to "resist not evil: but whoever shall smite thee on

thy right cheek, turn to him the other also," the intent of his words is unmistakable. It denies to men even the right of self-defense. Nonresistance is obligatory upon Christians as individuals and as members of society. When Jesus said again: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal"; "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on," he meant again exactly what he said. We are to live a carefree, easy-going, hand-to-mouth existence without forethought or anxiety. Thrift is an evidence of lack of faith and all outward achievement or striving after material results is a sinful waste of time and effort. This is the answer of the consistent literalist, and, to his credit, be it said that he has often suffered for his convictions in a way that demands our admiration for his consistency.

Thirdly: Most of us have answered the question in another way. Confronted with this dilemma, we have satisfied our ideals on the one hand and the practical urgency of life on the other by a compromise. The life and teaching of Jesus we hold in supreme regard. We place them before us as a shining but far distant goal; so far distant indeed that they are quite unrelated to daily work and ordinary relationships. They

satisfy our demand for a supreme object of devotion and loyalty. We give ourselves to them in moments of emotional intensity. We hold them before us in periods of worship and prayer. At the same time we are quite aware that they cannot be reduced to concrete terms or applied to actual situations.

This division of our interests is like the old-fashioned New England front and back parlors. The front room is filled with the family treasures, gathered by seafaring forefathers from all the seven seas. It is a closed apartment about which clings the odor of mustiness and sanctity. It is opened only on great occasions. The minister and a few other dignitaries are entertained there, but no profane foot may violate it. The back parlor, however, witnesses the daily ongoing of the family activities, and here neighbors and friends exchange their customary greetings and gossip. This very aptly exemplifies the compromise which most Christians have hitherto affected. In the chamber of their ideals Christ is supreme, but they are loath to make application of these ideals to the common round and trivial task of ordinary relationships.

I think there is on record the story of an Italian criminal society whose members were thugs and cutthroats but whose instinctive religious impulses found satisfaction in the employ-

ment of a chaplain who heard their confessions and conducted their devotions, and even blessed their nefarious enterprises.

It would hardly be fair to say that the so-called Christian nations of the world have done something of the same sort, and yet there is a similarity which may well prompt us to a humble admission of our shortcomings.

In the actual guidance of Jesus for the practical life of to-day there are, as we suggested in a previous chapter, two elements.

To begin with, we have the story of our Master's life and teaching as it is embodied in the New Testament. If we examine it, we will find that Jesus and his disciples lived in an Oriental environment. Their thought was naturally clothed in Oriental forms of speech. Fortunately, they were not matter-of-fact people like ourselves, unpoetic and unimaginative.

We will not find, therefore, in the New Testament hard-and-fast statements of a legal character which would fit every situation. No set of rules and regulations covering all possible exigencies is here given. No systematic code of ethics is here evolved. But we will find in the New Testament certain fundamental principles. For example, our attitude toward God is to be one of love and trust. God is not an impersonal Power but a wise and forgiving Father. We can

approach him through prayer. We are to serve him in righteousness and truth. Our attitude toward our fellow men is to be one of love and good will. The spirit of friendly neighborliness like that of the good Samaritan is to pervade our human relationships. The emphasis of our thought and endeavor is to be spiritual rather than materialistic. We are not forbidden to live by means of daily work and physical values, but we are taught that we are to live in and through none of these things. The values which we carry in our hearts are far more significant than these which we carry in our hands. The end of life is not to escape from pain and hardship but to lay hold on righteousness with such a grip that even death cannot shake it from our hands. Thus we are to fit ourselves for everlasting fellowship with God.

In a word, that is the substance of Jesus' teaching. Now, insofar as Jesus applied the principles which are here involved, He related them to the immediate situations which he and his disciples confronted—situations which we all agree were in many respects very different from our own.

The second and equally important element in the guidance of Jesus for our lives is "The Inner Light," as the Quakers would call it, of our own Christian consciousness. "The Indwelling Christ" Paul names it. Conscience is the

shortest and most common word that we apply to it. It is the Christian's inner sense of the fitness and rightness of things. It grows with our expanding experience. It unfolds with our own unfolding minds. It is our ultimate and final source of authority. It is therefore our constant guide in applying the teaching of our Master to present and concrete situations.

It is frequently necessary to reinterpret our principles of conduct to meet changing conditions. The Christian ideals of Paul's day prompted him to teach that women must keep silence in the churches, but the Christian conscience of to-day does not find it necessary to perpetuate that regulation. It emphatically repudiates it. Paul's Christian viewpoint permitted him, tacitly at least, to support the institution of human slavery and to send back a runaway slave, Onesimus, to his master, Philemon. On the contrary, the Christian viewpoint of Northern citizens sixty years ago prompted them to a radically different course. In the name of Christ they helped the runaway slave to get away and keep away from his master.

The Christian sentiment of America only a few years ago permitted some men to defend the liquor traffic by quotations from Scripture—surely the last resort of an evil cause. The Christian sentiment of America in this year of our

Lord, 1926, is determined that the liquor traffic is a criminal outlaw and must remain such. A century ago the Christian employer of labor satisfied himself by an attitude of generous condescension and paternal care for his employees. But the Christian employer of to-day is prompted by the ideals of Jesus to reexamine his attitude toward his employees and to substitute justice, fair play, and the spirit of brotherly cooperation for paternal generosity.

One more example very pertinent at this present moment. The Christian conscience of the Middle Ages permitted kings and emperors to invent causes for war if they did not have one ready at hand. For no better cause than to avenge a slight insult or satisfy some personal spite, armies of artisans and farmers who had no quarrel with each other were compelled to blow the souls out of one another. To-day the Christian conscience of the world is prompting us with renewed and determined vigor to exhaust every means of eliminating war and to devise other and more reasonable methods of settling disputes.

All this indicates how certainly the inner light of a growing Christian conscience is forever reinterpreting and applying the principles of our Lord's teaching as we find them embodied in the Gospels.

He is still the authoritative Master whose principles are eternal and whose indwelling presence illuminates and guides us in our constantly renewed efforts to apply these principles to changing conditions.

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 01130 3734

